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A N  
A D M O N I T I O N  
T O

*Church-Wardens.*

Exciting them to the  
Discharge of their Duty,  
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Answering the Pretences that are  
made for the Neglect of it.

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St. Matth. v. 33. ——— *Thou shalt not  
forswear thy self, but shalt perform  
unto the Lord thine Oath.*

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By JOSEPH HOOLE,  
Vicar of Haxey.

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L O N D O N:  
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St. Paul's Church-yard. M D C C X X V I I.

A N  
ADMONITION

TO





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A D M O N I T I O N  
T O  
*Church-Wardens.*



S the Wisdom of the Church of *England* appears in every Thing, so especially in the Rules and Method of her Government and Discipline. This Church being of equal Extent with the Nation, is divided into Two Provinces; either Province into several Dioceses; each Diocese into several Archdeaconries; and each of these (to name no other Divisions) into several Parishes. In each Parish, besides the Spiritual Pastor, whose Office consists in ministring the Doctrine, and Sacraments,

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and Discipline of Christ, in presiding in all the Parts of Divine Worship, and in shewing his Flock the way to Heaven, there are two or more Church-Wardens, whose Office consists in taking Care of the Fabrick, Goods and Possessions of the Church, in observing the Conduct and Behaviour both of the Pastor and Parishioners, and in making true Reports or Presentments to their Ecclesiastical Superiors, when they legally enquire after the Things and Persons that their Office extends to. Which Office, if it was but as duly performed as the Law intends and presumes, would be the most effectual Method, not only to secure our Churches, and the Houses and Revenues that belong to them, from any Injury or Diminution through Disuse or Encroachment, Neglect or Usurpation, to guard against any Contempt or profane Usage of any Thing dedicated to the Service of God, and to provide every Thing necessary for the Solemnities of Divine Worship; but also to suppress that Profaneness and Immorality which all good Christians so justly lament and complain of \*.

As to their Charge and Power, with relation to the Fabrick of the Church, its Repairs and Ornaments, and all such Things as are required by Law, for the more solemn and decent Performance of God's publick Worship, they are furnished with particular Directions in divers Printed Books; particularly in

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\* *Canons xxvi, and cxv.*



one published by a *Right Reverend and Learned Prelate, the present Lord Bishop of London*, under the Title of *Visitations Parochial and General*: And in another published by the late *Reverend Dr. Prideaux, Dean of Norwich*, with the Title of *Directions to Church-Wardens*; to which they should be recommended, and solicited, after their careful Perusal of them, to consider how much we are indebted to the Piety and Devotion of former Ages, for those noble Piles of Building, so convenient and fit for the publick Worship of God, which we have only Occasion to repair and preserve. And as we ought to do this out of Gratitude to our Ancestors, so it is a Debt that we owe to Posterity; for by repairing their Decays in Time (which puts us to small Charge) we provide against a much greater Expence, that would e're long fall upon those that succeed us. They must also confess, when they consider the Nature of Man, that their Devotions are raised or damped, maintained or interrupted, according to the Security or Danger, the Uncleanneſs or Decency of the Places in which they perform them. And it is plain enough to unprejudiced Persons, that the Plate and Vestments, and other Things which the Law requires our Churches to be furnished with, are of more Consideration than to be altogether neglected, although they had been entirely left to the Choice and Discretion of the Parish: But since constant Enquiries are made about them in the Ecclesiastical Courts, upon the Oath of Church-Wardens, they must needs think themselves obliged to provide them, and

to keep them always whole, and clean, and decent.

And as to the Charge that goes along with the Office of a Church-Warden, with respect to the Parish-Minister, his House, or Glebe, and the Rights and Profits of his Living, his Performance of the publick Offices of the Church, or his private Conduct and Behaviour, it is not the Design of these Papers to give any other Direction, than to refer the Officers to the *Canons and Rubricks*, and *Visitation Articles*, which will be a sufficient Guide to them. Only, as they are published with a Design to serve the Cause of God and Religion in general; and as the bad Examples of those that ought to be Precedents to their Flocks, are of the most pernicious Consequence, they would leave it to the Consideration of the Church-Wardens of those Parishes, where it is their Misfortune to live under the Ministry of an irregular Clergyman, whether they ought not discreetly and respectfully to put him in Mind both of his Duty and their own; and if he do not reform what is amiss in his Conduct, whether they should not think themselves obliged by their Oath, to represent the Matter very honestly and fairly to their Ordinary, as the Church of *England* seems to require \* of every one that hath Knowledge of their Offences.

But it is the principal Design of this Admonition, to turn their Observation upon the Lives

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\* 26 *Article*.

and Conduct of the Parishioners, and to urge them to consider what strict Obligations they are under, to admonish such of them as live in any scandalous Neglects or Vices, and to present those whom they do not observe to be reformed and amended; such as *common Swearers, and Drunkards, those that profane the Lord's Day, or habitually neglect the publick Worship of God, or the Holy Communion; those that are guilty of Adultery, or Fornication, or any kind of unclean or lewd Living; those that neglect to send their Children and Servants to Church to be Catechised, or that are chargeable with any other habitual Neglects or Immoralities, which are allowed to be of Ecclesiastical Cognisance.*

It is very well known, that when they enter upon their Office, they take a solemn Oath to this Effect, *They swear that they will truly and faithfully execute the Office of a Church-Warden within their Parish, according to the best of their Skill and Knowledge, and present such Things and Persons, as to their Knowledge are presentable by the Ecclesiastical Laws of this Realm.* Which must certainly bind them, so long as they continue in Office, to inspect the Lives and Conversation of their Parishioners. It is equally notorious, that when they exhibit any Presentment to the Ordinary, they take another Oath to this Purpose; *They swear that the Presentment they exhibit, is a true and full Presentment of such Persons and Things within their Parish, as they know to be presentable by the Ecclesiastical Laws of this Realm.*

And



And if they be but once sworn, (as the way sometime is) namely, at their Entrance upon their Office, *faithfully to execute the same, and to make such Presentments as by Law they are bound*; they are no less obliged by that single promissory Oath, than they would be if they were also expressly sworn to their Presentments when they exhibit them.

Certain it is, that they are as solemnly bound as Heaven and Earth can bind them, to make faithful Presentments, without concealing or neglecting any Thing or Person presentable, out of Fear or Favour, or upon the Account of any Reward or Relation whatever; or without representing any Thing to be otherwise, than they know it to be from their own Observation, or really believe it to be upon the Reports of publick Fame.

Now in order to this, the Church has taken due Care that fit Persons may be chosen to this Office, \* and hath provided that they may not be surprized with any unexpected Calls of their Presentments, by limiting the Times when they are to be made ||. But yet she allows them the Liberty to present as oft as they shall think meet, † that Offenders may not pass unpunished, by deferring Presentments to the usual and stated Times. She hath also directed them, as to the Crimes that are to be presented; which are, not only such as they know

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\* Canon lxxxix and xc.

|| Can. cxvi.

† Can. cxvi.

to be committed, but also such as they know there is a publick Fame of \*. And that they may not think of passing over their Presentments to their Successors, she requires the old Officers to exhibit their Presentments before the new ones are sworn ‡. And lest they should omit their Duty, by the hasty making of their Bills at the Time and Place of Visitation, she hath charged the Visitants to deliver to them a Book of Articles, either when they are sworn to their Office, or when they are summoned to the Visitation, to the end that they may have Leisure to peruse it, and to frame their Presentments at Home, advisedly and truly, like honest Men †. And to deter them from the wilful Neglect of their Duty, she forbids the Minister in that Case to give them the Holy Communion ||; and the Ordinary is also required to proceed against them, as Persons guilty of wilful Perjury \*\*. But on the other Hand, to encourage those that are better disposed to do their Duty, she hath provided that they shall be liable to no Prosecution for so doing |||.

All this Care hath the Church taken; which as it justifies her from the Imputations of her Enemies, so it aggravates the Crime of those Officers that neglect their Duty, and dispense with their Oaths and Consciences.

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\* *Can. cxvii.* ‡ *Can. cxviii.* † *Can. cxix.* || *Can. xxvi.* \*\* *Can. cxvii.* ||| *Can. cxv.*

But one would hope that Persons of so good Sense, as we may generally suppose the Church-Wardens to be, would more honestly and conscientiously discharge their Duty, especially if they would but attend to the following Considerations.

I. If they would seriously reflect upon the Nature of an Oath, they would form better Judgments of it, and take it to be (as it really is) a Business of more Weight and Moment, than to be so grossly neglected and disregarded, as it commonly is. When Men take a *Promissory Oath*, such as that with which the Church-Wardens enter upon their Office, or an *Affertory Oath*, such as that upon which they exhibit their Presentments; they lay their Hands upon the Holy Gospels, and kiss the Book. The Sense of which solemn Rite, when drawn into Words, is this: *We now stand in the Sight and Presence of that God, to whom all Hearts be open, and from whom no Secrets are hid; and as ever we expect that he should help and bless us in this World, or save us in the next, we oblige ourselves honestly to perform what the Church doth justly expect from us: Neither Fear, Favour, nor Prejudice, our own Interest, or any other Consideration, shall either allure us to make false Presentments, or affright us from making such as are true, or tempt us to neglect what we thus solemnly Promise and Undertake. We appeal to the great God, whose Nature and Will is made manifest in this Sacred Book, both as a Witness of our Truth and Sincerity, and as a Judge to punish us,*  
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if we be guilty of any gross and wilful Neglect, Falshood or Prevarication. Now if after all this, Men are false to their Oath, it is easy to observe what they forfeit. They at once give up all their Hopes of God's Favour and Blessing in this World, and in the next. They do as it were call upon God to curse them, to blast them, to set an indelible Mark upon them, for the Affront that they offer to their Maker, and the Prejudice which they bring to Truth and Religion. What stronger Obligations can they lay themselves under, than the Oath of God? What can be more presumptuous than the Sin of Perjury? If they appeal but to *Men* for the Truth of what they say, and utter those Things that are notoriously known to be false, it must be one of the greatest Affronts they can offer them. What then must it be to appeal to the Knowledge, and Truth, and Justice of *God*, and after that, so grossly to neglect and disregard what they have appealed to him about?

II. The Consideration of the Plainness of their Duty, should excite them to regard and discharge it. If it could bear a Question what their Duty is, or whether they were not under the strictest Obligations to perform it, they might have some Colour for neglecting it: But the Case is quite otherwise. They know by the *Canons* which they find in every Church, and by the *Rubrick* which they find in every *Common-Prayer-Book*, and in the *Book of Articles* which they have in their own Hands, what they are to enquire after, what their Duty

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is, and by what Oaths they are bound to perform it.

Let us suppose that the Articles of Enquiry should be sent from the Bishop, or his Arch-deacon, to every particular Church-Warden, with Orders to consider well of them, as being such Enquiries, to which he must upon Oath return distinct Answers before him in his Visitation, and that by Word of Mouth, (as the ancient *Testes Synodales* did \*.) And these following should be some of the Enquiries, viz.

Is there any in your Parish that is a common Swearer?

Is there any in your Parish that is a common Drunkard?

Is there any in your Parish that lieth under a common Fame, or vehement Suspicion of Adultery, Fornication, or other Uncleanness?

Are there any in your Parish that neglect the publick Worship of God on the Lord's-Day?

Are there any that habitually neglect the Holy Communion?

Are there any that profane the Lord's-Day, by doing their own ordinary Work, or by Sports and Recreations, or that suffer their Children or Servants so to do?

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\* *Bishop Gibson's Visitations Parochial and General*, p. 73, &c.

Are there any Parents or Masters, that neglect to send their Children and Servants to the Church, to be Catechized by the Minister?

Are there any that behave themselves irreverently in Time of God's publick Worship, and do not stand up, or kneel down, or make not such Answers, as they are ordered to do in the Book of *Common-Prayer*?

Suppose (I say) that every Church-Warden should be called by Name before the Ordinary, and should take a solemn Oath to return direct and true Answers to each of these Questions, *vivâ voce*, in the open Court, how many are there that would give Negative Answers, if they seriously considered the Obligation of their Oath, the Plainness of the Enquiries, and the Case of their Parishes? If a Church-Warden was to answer any of these Enquiries to an ordinary Friend in his own House, in the way of common Conversation, he would not have the Assurance to give such Answers as he knew to be contrary to the Truth. And does his answering them upon Oath, to a Person who has Authority to propose them, either obscure the Matter, or take off his Obligation to speak the Truth? It is really very shocking to consider the true and full Sense of most of the Presentments that return *omnia bene*. It is as much as to say, We do solemnly affirm in the Presence of God, upon the Oath we have taken, and the Hopes that we have to be saved, that there is not a common Swearer or Drunkard in our

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Parish:



Parish: There is not one Person in it, who is known, or vehemently suspected to be guilty of Fornication, Adultery, or any unclean or lewd Practices: We do solemnly affirm upon the Faith of Men and Christians, that every Person in our Parish duly frequents God's Publick Worship, and frequently receives the Holy Communion: There is not one Person in it who profanes the Lord's-Day, or suffers his Children or Servants to do so: Every Parent sends his Children, and every Master sends his Servants to be publickly Catechised; and every one of our Parishioners performs the Duties of God's publick Worship with all due Reverence: And in a word, we neither know of any *Person*, nor of any *Thing*, that is presentable in our Parish: And all and every Part of this we solemnly declare to be true; and as a Testimony thereof, we set our Hands to it in the Presence of God Almighty, who knows our Hearts, and will at last judge and reward us according to our Thoughts, Words and Actions. I refer it to every Man of Sense and Sincerity to judge, whether this be not the true Import of such Presentments; and leave it upon the Consciences of those that make them, to consider whether the Case be such in the Parishes from which they are returned.

III. As the Plainness of their Duty should move them to perform it, so should the Dignity of their Office excite them to discharge it. It is honourable indeed, not only to act under  
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the Laws and Governors of the Nation, but, to be particularly engaged in the Cause of God and Religion, to enter into a Confederacy against the Powers of Darkneſs, to be the glorious Instruments of delivering the Souls of Men out of the Snares of the Devil, and reducing them into the Service of God, which is perfect Freedom. Beſides this, the Reputation of this Office is raiſed by the Notice which the Laws of the Land have taken of thoſe that are called to it, enlarging their Power, and extending it to ſeveral Things in common with other Civil Officers; for as much as they are ſuppoſed to be Perſons of the beſt Character, Wiſdom and Experience in a Pariſh, that are recommended to the Court for their Church-Wardens.

IV. The Law hath not only made this an Office of *Dignity*, but alſo of *Truſt*. Church-Wardens are joined with the Miniſter in the Government of the Pariſh. It appears from the Canons before cited, that the Church hath committed the Repreſſing of Wickedneſs, and the Maintenance of Religion and Virtue in every Pariſh, to the Miniſter and Church-Wardens, *in ſuch a Manner*, and hath by indemnifying *them only* in the Proſecution of this Work, ſo fully expreſſed her Dependance upon them, both as to their Sufficiency and Integrity, that ſhe barely *permits* other Perſons to concern themſelves in this Affair; and this Permiſſion, in the Senſe of the Learned, is not to be underſtood as an *Invitation to*, but as a *Negation of* this

Act. If others are so Officious to inform against their Neighbours, and fail in their Proofs, it is at their Peril, they are obnoxious to the Penalties of the Law; but it is otherwise with Ministers and Church-Wardens; as to the Presentments which they exhibit, all the Rules, both of Charity and Government, presume that they do nothing therein of Malice, but for the Discharge of their Consciences; and therefore they are not to be troubled for them, nor is any Ecclesiastical or Temporal Judge to admit of any Complaint, Plea or Suit against them. Should they not then think themselves bound by the Rules both of *Justice*, and *Honour*, and *Ingenuity*, to execute the Trust reposed in them? Which Trust is still greater, since *Parochial Visitations* are very much discontinued, or not so constant as they formerly have been. There are indeed many Church-Wardens all over the Nation that are *Gentlemen*, and consequently should have more Honour than to betray their Trust; and many others are very *honest and worthy Persons*, and which one would hope, would not violate their Oaths upon any Score. But it may justly be feared, that there are also many who are more careless and negligent, and that need to be solicited by all proper Arguments to do their Duty. And every one of them is capable of discerning the Obligations they are under, in Point of natural Justice, to answer the Expectations of those, that out of their good Opinion of them, entrusted them with



with those Concerns that their Office obliges them to regard. It is upon the Score of this Trust, that they are stiled the *Wardens or Guardians* of the Church. They should therefore consider, that in all other Cases, a Breach of Trust fixes an odious and ill Character upon a Person: And is Unfaithfulness here more innocent, or less scandalous, than in other more common and ordinary Cases? Or rather, is it not more odious and criminal to deceive the Church and their Neighbours, God and the World at once,

Suppose that the *Societies for the Reformation of Manners*, should entrust Two of their Members in every Parish, to inspect the Behaviour of the People, and to inform them of such Things as are scandalous and odious both to Heaven and Earth; and they, quite contrary to their Trust, neglect to make their Observations, or, observing, neglect to give Information to those that would take the most prudent and proper Methods to reform them, Would not such be reputed unworthy to continue in the Society? And yet they only break their *Promise*; but Church-Wardens, by neglecting their Duty, break a *solemn Oath*, by which they have bound themselves to God and the Church, conscientiously to regard their Duty. What therefore must they be thought to deserve, but such Ecclesiastical Censures, and Civil Punishments, as the Laws in that Case have provided?

V. The careful Discharge of this Office would take off the Reproach that is thrown upon the Church of *England* for want of Discipline; When it is observed, that good and bad promiscuously crowd to our Altars; and that no Notice is taken of scandalous Persons; when those that appeared to have no Sense of God or Religion, but lived in the constant Neglect of all publick Worship, are buried with the same Solemnities that are used at the Funerals of the most exemplary and pious, it gives Men mean and low Ideas of the Church, and of her Laws and Governors. And we have no way to answer our Adversaries but this, to point out the Laws which are made for the good Government of the Church; which if they were duly executed, would take hold of the Persons complained of, and see them either effectually reformed, or legally excommunicated; and then the Objection would be clearly removed, and the Reputation of the Church, in Point of Purity and Discipline, would rise in Proportion. But this will never be effected, till the Church-Wardens conscientiously perform their Duty; and therefore as they are Christians, and Churchmen, they should think themselves obliged to it.

VI. Besides, the Honour of their Maker is very much concern'd in this Affair. When they act upon Principle, and acquit themselves like Persons of Credit and good Conscience,  
God

God is not only honoured by the Religious Regard which they pay to their sacred Oaths, but Modesty and Virtue, Piety and Religion, are then likely to meet with some Countenance, and will be less liable to the Dangers of those Inundations of Vice and Debauchery, that the Neglect of their Duty does too much encourage. It is true, God is able to assert his own Cause in an extraordinary Manner. He could arrest a wicked Person in the very Act of Sin, and make him a dreadful Warning to all about him. He has rained down Fire and Brimstone from Heaven. He has opened the Earth to swallow up wicked Men in their Sin, and sent them quick to Hell: And so he could still do; his Power is not abated; his Justice and Severity against Sinners is still the same; only now, in the different State of his Church, God chuses to act by other Rules. Since his Religion has been confirmed by a Train of Miracles, and is taken under the Protection of the Powers of the Earth; he now expects that his Vicegerents should be nursing Fathers to it, and restrain by their Civil Power the wicked and incorrigible; but how shall they do it, unless those that are put in Authority under them, by whose Eyes they see, and by whose Hands they act, will faithfully discharge the Trust reposed in them? And how shall subordinate Magistrates, or Ecclesiastical Judges, proceed in the Execution of the Laws, unless Matters be brought before them in a legal Way? And how shall we expect this, if the Persons depu-  
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ted and appointed by the Law, to observe the Manners of the People, do grossly and wilfully neglect their Duty, and give not due Information to their Superiors?

VII. Finally, The Consideration of the good or bad Influences and Consequences of their Care or Neglect, both with respect to others and themselves, in this World and the future, should solicit them to regard their Oaths, and keep their Consciences clear and unburdened with Perjury, or partaking with wicked Persons in the Guilt of those Things that want to be reformed. The Neglect of their Duty, and Contempt of their Oaths, is a very bad Precedent to others, and gives too much Encouragement, not only to the common Vices which they neglect to prevent, but also to the horrid Sin of Perjury. But on the contrary, their conscientious Respect to the Oath of God, shews all about them a good Example, and excites them to more Care in discharging the several Offices upon which they enter with the like Solemnity, as well as in the Depositions they make in either Civil or Criminal Causes, in Courts of Justice. Besides this, with Respect to themselves, as on one Hand, by their Neglects, they not only lose their Credit and Reputation, and render themselves obnoxious to the Penalties of our Ecclesiastical and Civil Laws, but also make themselves accessory to the Sins of their Neighbours, share deeply with them in the Guilt, and become liable to the  
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mal and eternal Consequences of God's Displeasure in the future State: So on the other Hand, when they conscientiously perform their Duty, without Prejudice or Partiality, out of a rational Zeal for the Honour of Christianity, and a true Principle of Love to God, and the Souls of their Brethren, they not only recommend themselves to the Regard and Esteem of the wisest and best of Men, but also to the Favour of God Almighty, and will at last find themselves entitled to the Reward of those that have turned many to Righteousness.

But, for as much as we cannot suppose that so many of the better Rank of Men, all the Nation over, should so constantly agree in the same Neglects, unless they had something to say for themselves, or thought they were upon one Account or other excusable; Let us consider what may be said in their Behalf; and it is not a single Excuse that is made, but several Things are urged for that Purpose.

I. And first, some say, *If they should present their Neighbours, it would be censured as an Instance of Malice or Ill-Will.* But the Reason of that Censure is the general Neglect of the Duty. Let us but see these Officers once conspire in acting honestly, impartially, and prudently, with a sincere Regard to God's Honour, and the Good of their Neighbours, and their Behaviour will sufficiently convince all that know them, that they bear no Ill-will to their Persons, although they cannot shew any Respect

spect for their Crimes. They may at the same Time hate the Sins, and bear an undissembled Affection for the Sinners; and this they cannot express more effectually, than by taking such Measures as shall stop them in their Career, and not suffer them to go blindfold into an amazing Eternity.

2. If they say, *It puts their Neighbours to Charge and Trouble.* Let them consider whose Fault that is: Must an honest and conscientious Man neglect his bounden Duty, to save an ill Neighbour a few Miles Riding, or a little Money? Let him either reform upon the friendly Application, and private Admonition of the Officers, or thank himself for the Consequences of doing their farther Duty.

3. *If they fear the Displeasure or ill Offices that these Presentments may expose them to:* Let them be laid in the Balance with the Displeasure or Favour of God Almighty. It is their Business to do their Duty, and trust the Consequences with divine Providence. But these bad Returns can be feared no longer than the ill Habits continue, which they endeavour to reform; which happy Effect can be no sooner wrought, than their Curses and Ill-will shall turn into Blessings and good Wishes.

4. It would be too great a Disparagement to their Sense, to suppose them seriously to urge, that *this is doing as they would not be done by;*  
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for, at this Rate, no Magistrate must animadvert upon, or punish a Criminal. The Rule in such Cases is to be taken with this Variation, of doing as we *should* be done by.

5. They are of the lowest Class that say, *They do as others did before them, and still do all about them.* For this may be said in very bad Cases, such as Drunkenness, Blasphemy, and ten Thousand Villanies. We should not follow a Multitude to do Evil. And if many others neglect their Duty, the more are we obliged to regard ours; which if we do not, as we follow them in their Neglect or Crimes, we shall also share with them in their Punishments. And is it not likely to bring down a heavy Load of Vengeance upon Mens guilty Heads, when Multitudes, at the Expence of their Oaths, constantly connive at the most flagrant Instances of Immorality and Profaneness?

6. It is a little more subtle to argue, *That our Ecclesiastical Superiors dispense with their Obligations, for as much as they seem to connive at, and take no Notice of their Neglects or Omissions.* But this cannot be, it is not in their Power to dispense with Mens Oaths: And although they do not prosecute Officers for neglecting their Duty, yet that Neglect is sinful, as well as following the Devices and Desires of our own Hearts, is so in the Sight of God, although he does not immediately execute his Threats upon us; nor can we therefore conclude, that God  
takes

takes away our Obligations to a godly, righteous, and sober Life.

7. As to the Argument that is drawn from *long Difuse*, it rather serves to-aggravate than excuse this Neglect of Presenting, since this Neglect is the very Occasion of that Difuse.

8. It is not to be allowed that *these Oaths are administred and taken with Reserves*. This indeed would relax their Obligation, and set Men as much at Liberty, as if they never took them. But it is quite contrary to the End of imposing them, which is the Security that the Things shall be done, which in the plain and literal Sense are contained in them, and to which the Government must needs intend that they shall be obliged by them.

9. If they ask, *To what Purpose they should present such Things as the Court either cannot, or will not prosecute?* Since as to Things presented upon common Fame, the Power of the Court is restrained by the Statute \*; and as to notorious Facts, of which there is the Confession of the Parties, or undeniable Evidence to prove them, Matters are often made up they know not how; and that Part of the Church which is most concerned, receives no Satisfaction about the Repentance of those that were presented.

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\* 17. Car. 1. C. 11.

As to the first Part of this Pretence, it is to be granted, that since the making of the Canons in the Year 1603, the Practice of the Ecclesiastical Courts has been altered by Act of Parliament. The High Commission Court has been since abolished, and the Oath *ex officio* has been taken away \*; since which, the Presentments upon *Common Fame* have received a great Abatement. And it is far from the Design of these Papers, to lead or direct Church-Wardens to do those Things which would rather disturb the Peace, than promote the Purity of Parishes. Ill-natur'd or uncertain Reports are not sufficient Grounds for their Presentments, nor should they expose themselves or their Neighbours to Expence or Vexation, in Cases where there is Room for Christian Charity to judge favourably. It is also to be considered, that the Rules of *Law*, and Dictates of *Friendship*, are of different Consideration: The *Law* will not animadvert upon every Thing that a *Friend* may think fit to reprove: And therefore when Advice is slighted, or Admonitions are not precisely observed, it does not follow that the Neglect of these is an Infraction or Contempt of the Law, or that our Governors will punish those that are not so wise to be directed by their truest and most judicious Friends. But yet, when Persons are vehemently suspected of any lewd

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\* 13. Car. II. Chap. 12.



Principles or Practices, forbid by the Canons, and subject to the Cognizance of the Ecclesiastical Courts, and either the Minister or Church-Wardens, or both together in friendly Sort admonish them, they will either awaken them to more Care and Circumspection; or if they still persist in the Courses that first raised, and now strengthen the Suspicion, they cannot be liable to the Imputation of either Rashness or Malice, in presenting them as scandalous, and labouring under a common Fame of those Crimes, from the Suspicion of which, after Knowledge of their being suspected, they take no Care to clear themselves.

And as to the other Part of this Pretence, we often see the good Effect of Presentments, in the publick Penances which the Persons presented do frequently perform in our Churches, as well as in such just and proper Censures, as the Cases presented require, and which serve as a Warning to others; and no doubt prevent many of those Lapses which we should otherwise have the sad Occasions to observe. But be that as it will, let the Church-Wardens, by laying Things in a proper way before their Ordinaries, discharge their Consciences, and deliver their Souls; and let the Officers act as they will answer it to their Superiors, or at a higher Tribunal than theirs.

10. It may perhaps be pretended, that *These Presentments are not made in the Ecclesiastical Courts, because the Officers of those Courts are*  
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*observed to proceed without any Regard to the Reformation of such Abuses, Neglects or Crimes, as are presented in them, in a very crude and formal way, minding little else but their own Profit.* But this is a wrong way of Reasoning, to argue from the Faults observable in some particular Officers, that the same will be found in them all; and it is no less uncharitable than false. Let us appeal to Experience and Observation, and we shall find great Numbers of not only *learned*, but very *wise* and *worthy Persons*, entrusted with the Cognizance of Ecclesiastical Affairs, who take Care that the Dispatches of all Matters that are brought before them be regular and honourable, and that there be no Occasions given for any just Complaints of Grievance or Oppression. Besides, it must be granted, that the Officers of these Courts are as much entitled to their legal Fees, as the Officers of any Civil Courts are to theirs, and should be no more blamed for taking them, than a Labourer for taking his Hire. As to the Method of Proceeding, they are tied down to that by the Rules of the Court; and if the Forms of the Instruments or Orders which they make out, be considered without Prejudice, they will be found very pertinent, grave and solemn. And after all the Clamour made against them, it would be found upon Trial, that if Ministers would appear for their respective Parishioners, when they are called into these Courts upon their Presentments, a very great Regard would be paid to their Representations. At their In-

stance, in many Cases, the Persons presented would meet with a proper and suitable Admonition, and be put to no farther Charge or Trouble, unless their own wilful Neglect or Contempt make it necessary. But should the Prosecution prove ever so severe and expensive, the Church-Wardens would not be responsible for that, nor should they incur the wilful Guilt of Perjury, in order to prevent it.

II. Nor need they fear, that *The Consequences of doing their Duty in a prudent and Christian Way, will prove any Prejudice to the Established Church, or increase the Schism, by filling the Conventicles, or separate Meeting-Houses, with those that by this Means are driven out of the Church.* For if they be scandalous and obstinate, it will be no Reproach to the Church to cast them out, nor any Credit to those of another Communion to take them in: What Reputation can habitual Swearers or Drunkards, Whoremongers or profane Persons, or those that are noted for any scandalous Neglects or Enormities, bring to any Society of Christians, till they be reformed? And when they are truly so, there will be little Danger of their running out of one Sin into another, and falling into the Snares of Schism, after they are delivered from the Chains of other Sins, purely because their Spiritual Pastor, and Christian Neighbours, took the best Methods in their Power for their Deliverance. But if this should prove the unhappy Consequence of it, yet as the  
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Church-Officers would not be chargeable with it, so neither should they do one Evil to prevent another, but act the Part of honest Men, and good Christians, and leave the Issues to the Providence of God, and the Consciences of the Persons concerned.

12. *There are indeed other Courses that may be taken to check Profaneness and Immorality, since very good Laws have been made against them.* But this of Presenting them must be taken; those Laws neither can, nor ever were intended to dispense with the Oaths of Church-Wardens, or take off their Obligations; they are an additional Provision made for the Honour of God and Religion: They shew, that in the Sense of the Government, there is a Necessity of suppressing Irreligion and Wickedness, and all prudent and proper Methods are to be taken for that Purpose.

13. It would reflect too much upon our Legislators, as well as upon our Laws, and the Methods of Proceeding in Criminal Causes, both in Civil and Ecclesiastical Courts, to say, *Compulsion is not a proper Method to be taken in the Cause of Religion and Virtue; which must either be the Matter of Mens Choice, or it cannot be acceptable to the Almighty.* We are here to consider, that the Church of Christ established amongst us, is a visible Society, of which as Christ is the supreme invisible Head, so next and immediately under him, our Kings (from whom

whom the Bishops derive all their Civil Power) are the supreme and visible Heads, as appears from our *Laws*, and *Canons*, and *Articles* \*. And, these in Subordination to Christ, have Power to regulate Mens outward Conduct and Behaviour in Religious as well as Civil Matters. And when they by their Laws require their Subjects to repair to the publick Worship of God, to hear his Word preached, to make a publick Confession of their Christian Faith, to go to the Holy Communion, or the like, they neither exceed their Commission, nor do the least Injury to their Subjects: For, admit that some would neither go to the Holy Communion, nor to the publick Worship of God, were they liable to no Penalties for their Refusal: And that whilst they go thither only to avoid those Penalties, they cannot thereby recommend themselves to the Divine Acceptance, because this their Compliance is a bare external Action, not resulting from any Love to God, or any Sense of their Duty to him, or from any Hopes or Desires they have of improving in Knowledge or Grace; yet neither can they be acceptable to God, whilst they habitually and wilfully absent themselves from his publick Worship. And besides, if Authority interposes, and brings them to the Church, or the Holy Communion, a bad Habit is thereby

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\* 24 H. VIII. C. 12. 25 H. VIII. C. 19, 20,  
28. Can. 2. Art. 37.

broken.

broken, and a better introduced. The Laws made in Behalf of Christianity are executed; and being brought into God's way, we may hope he will meet with them, and surprize them with good Impressions, and bring them at last to a better Sense of Things.

Further, with Regard to those Instances in which Authority interposes it self, to restrain or direct Mens outward Behaviour, they suffer no Prejudice; for as on one Hand they are not obliged to do any Thing *sinful*, so on the other, they are not obliged to forbear any Thing *lawful*. They are not suffered to affront God, or the Government, or to do what is highly Prejudicial to themselves, and their Neighbours. The Laws forbid Blasphemy and Profaneness, common Cursing and Swearing, Working and Sporting upon the Lord's Day, lewd and filthy Talk or Behaviour, and such other Things as they themselves must confess to be vile and wicked, base and dishonourable. And although their inward Inclinations carry them to these Immoralities, which they abstain from purely for fear of the Laws, and therefore they are looked upon as guilty Persons in the Sight of God, yet these outward Restraints secure that Regularity and Decorum, which infinitely more becomes them as reasonable Creatures, than the Indulgence and Gratification of these Vices. And as the external Forbearance renders them less Criminal in the Eye of the Law at present, so it will make their Damnation more tolerable at last. And therefore upon the whole, there is

no



no Compulsion or Restraint to be complained of, which does them any Prejudice as Men or Christians.

14. It is granted, that *Several Laws upon which the Articles of Enquiry are grounded, were originally intended against the Papists.* But this cannot be pretended of the Laws against Immorality and Profaneness, nor of *all* those that relate to the publick Worship of God; and as for those that were principally designed against the Papists, since they are still in Force, and in their literal Sense extend to Protestants; and since in the Reason of Things, these, as well as the other, are obliged to do what those Laws were provided to secure, there is not the least Reason to conclude, that they should not be put in Execution against one as well as the other, 'till it can be made appear that Protestants are more excusable than Papists for absenting themselves from the Church, and for neglecting the Holy Communion.

It is true indeed, that *Protestant Dissenters are exempted from the Penalties of certain Laws, that were originally intended against the Papists, as well as others provided against other Sectaries.* And this is an Argument that the Laws made against Papists may affect Protestants, 'till by another Law they are expressly exempted. But besides this, they are not absolutely exempted from the Penalties of either, but only upon their Compliance with certain Terms and Conditions; for want of conforming to which,  
great

great Numbers of them are not entituled to that Exemption. And further, this Act is not to be pleaded in their Excuse or Favour, when they habitually neglect all publick Worship, &c. Nor does it grant them the least Indulgence as to any Instances of Immorality and Profaneness, of which whosoever are guilty, whether they be Papists or Dissenters, of any Communion, or of no Communion, they ought to be Presented.

15. Some indeed are pleased to urge, that *The Times will not bear such strict Animadversion upon Peoples Lives, as all these Arguments and Exhortations seem to have in View.* Not considering, that this is a Point which does not belong to Church-Wardens, but their Governors to determine. But as bad as the Times are supposed to be, it is to be hoped they will bear that a Man should be true to his Trust, and his Oath, and not be forsworn to God and his Church. But as to those that will still urge the Iniquity of the Times against that Strictness of Discipline that is much to be desired, they might do well to reflect a little upon the Discipline of the *Primitive Church*, when Persons guilty of Adultery, habitual Intemperance, or any other notorious and scandalous Sins, were excluded the Church, and some of them in some Churches, were not restored to Peace and Communion again, unless they gave the greatest Testimonies of their Repentance, by Prayers and Tears, and Prostrations, by Austerities,

sterities, Patience, and good Works, and by an entire and chearful Submission to the Discipline of the Church, for the Space of six, or ten, or twenty, or thirty Years, unless in the very Article of Death. And yet these were Times of the most cruel Persecutions, when Christians met with all kinds of temporal Discouragements to persevere in the Profession of their Religion. When we therefore compare their Discipline with our own, and find that the Penances imposed upon the greatest Sinners of these Times, who submit to the Censures of the Church, are not so great as those performed for the smallest Errors of the Primitive Times, we shall be ashamed to complain of any Severities that are now used.

16. But, *may not the Church-Wardens hope, and wait, for the Amendment of a bad Liver, which is as likely to be the Consequence of their Forbearance, and prudent Reproof and Admonition, as of a troublesome and chargeable Prosecution?* 'Tis true, better Effects are often observed to follow private and friendly Applications, than such Courses by which Mens Vices are exposed, their Interests disobliged, and their Passions provoked. And therefore have Parish Officers Time and Liberty allowed them, to try how they can work upon them, before they be obliged to present them: But when they find them irreclaimable to the most discreet and obliging Methods, they cannot then have any Grounds



Grounds for the Hopes here pretended, but must confess that there is greater Probability of bringing about their Reformation, by referring them to their Superiors, than by suffering them to go on without Check or Controul. Besides, there are some Offenders which the Officers are not at the Liberty to pass by, whatever Hopes they may have of their Repentance; and they are Persons that have been guilty of Fornication, or Adultery; for the Church being scandalized at these Offences, should by the publick Penance of the Persons, be satisfied of their Penitence, and better Sense of Things; but that cannot be regularly enjoined by any but the Court; and those that appear unwilling to give the Church that Satisfaction, will be able to give very little Evidence of their true Repentance.

17. To say, *They pass by several Faults or Neglects of their Ministers, and why may not the Parishioners expect the like Indulgence?* is to excuse one Fault with another. There are indeed several of the Canons, which seem not at all to be considered and observed by the Clergy; some of which, in the Opinion of great Casuists, through general Disuse and Connivance, are grown obselete, and their strict Obligation abated or laid aside \*. And as to their Neg-

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\* *Bishop Stillingfleet's Ecclesiastical Cases,*  
P. 374, 379.

lect of those that are still in Force, it may not be any Fault of theirs; they do not perhaps read publick Prayers on *Wednesdays, Fridays, or Holy-Days*, because the Parishioners do not attend them. Nor do they Catechise according to the Rubrick, because Parents neglect to send their Children for that Purpose: But if they break the Canons in such Instances as are plain Irregularities, they ought no more to be connived at, than any of their irregular Parishioners.

18. Well, but *Suppose Church-Wardens should present ever so faithfully upon the Canons, Rubricks and Visitation Articles, which it is granted they may have Ability and Opportunity to consult; yet the Oath goes further still, and takes in every Thing that they know to be Presentable by the Ecclesiastical Laws of this Realm, which lie quite out of their Way, they neither have the Books, nor understand the Languages in which they are written.* It is true, that by the Oath it appears, that these Ecclesiastical Laws are the proper and legal Rule and Measure of their Presentments; but yet since the Articles of Visitation are drawn up by such Persons as are well acquainted with those Laws, it may be supposed, that they take in the principal Things which they are empowered by those Laws to enquire after, and nothing else; and therefore it would be well if they would faithfully answer these Enquiries. And as on the one Hand, the Oath binds them to present those

those Immoralities and Neglects, which they know to be contrary to the Ecclesiastical Laws: So as to other Things which either come not to their Knowledge, or which they do not know to be contrary to any Ecclesiastical Law, they are not under the like Obligation. But if they are desirous to know what is still further presentable by those Laws, their Enquiries will meet with Competent Satisfaction in some late Books, published in our own Language\*. And if in the mean Time such Things happen in their Parishes, that they may think to be Presentable, but which they are not perfectly satisfied about, they can hardly have the Opportunity of advising with any that may be better able to resolve them than their Parish Minister.

19. But finally, *If this be a Matter of that Consequence and Necessity that is here pretended, why do not Ministers take Care to present such Things as the Court should take Cognizance of? They are good Judges of the Occasions that fall out for doing it; they may be supposed, of all others, to act with the least Prejudice, and with a sincere Regard and Concern for the Health of Mens Souls.* It would be well indeed, if any would do it in a Christian and legal Way; and Ministers may do it; but where the Church-Wardens, or conscientious Parishioners are so

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\* Especially in Bishop Gibson's Codex.



well disposed, they *may much better* do it: It is true, as the Canon observes, † Ministers are the Persons that should have the chief Care for the suppressing of Sin and Impiety in their Parishes; they are principally concerned to cultivate and encourage Religion and good Manners amongst their People: They must needs remember the solemn Exhortation which the Bishop made to them, when they were admitted to the Sacred Order of Priesthood\*: Nor can they well forget the solemn Promise which at the same Time they made to the Bishop, and the Church of God; and as they are sensible of the Obligations they are under, it is to be hoped they are in a constant Disposition to regard them. But the Church did wisely consider, that they cannot be supposed to mix with all sorts of Persons, and to see and hear every Thing that may need Reformation, and therefore she hath called in the Church-Wardens to their Assistance, as Persons upon whom they may depend for Information of the Principles, Neglects or Irregularities, that fall not under their own Observation. She considered also, that Spiritual Persons would chuse to use Spiritual Methods in the Management of their Cures; and would rather promote their Master's Interest by Persuasion than Compulsion, and try to stop and reduce those that go wrong

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† *Can. cxiii.*

\* *Form of ordering Priests.*

by private Rebukes and Admonitions, or friendly Intreaties and Importunities, rather than by Presentments and Prosecutions: And therefore hath she left them more at Liberty to take such Methods, as in their Christian Wisdom and Prudence they may think most proper: And yet to prevent the ill Consequences that might attend too much Lenity and Indulgence, she hath more strictly obliged the Church-Wardens to present such Things and Persons as are Presentable; and such especially as upon Trial are found incorrigible to more private and friendly Applications. And as the Minister takes Care both to exercise and preserve the Power which the Law hath given him in the Choice of Church-Wardens, and suffers not that Choice to turn upon the Order of their Habitations, or any other Circumstances, than their sober and religious Deportment: So it may well be presumed, that he will ever be ready to act in Concert with them, to advise, to encourage, to assist them; to join with them in their Inspection of, or Enquiries after, the Behaviour and Deportment of their Parishioners, in admonishing those that are either notorious for, or by good Men very much suspected of wicked Principles, or evil Habits, in showing them what Obligations they are under to take due Notice of such Things; and if they neglect their friendly Warning, what Necessity they will be under to refer their Case to the Cognizance of their Superiors: And when they are under that unhappy Necessity,

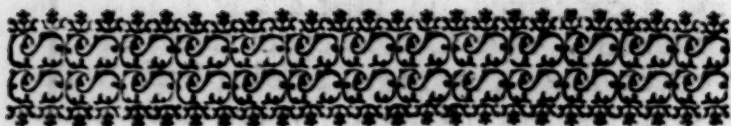
the careful and vigilant Pastor will either go along with them, or direct them in the Discharge of their Duty, and will also apprize the Ordinary (who is to issue out a Process upon their Presentments) of the very Truth of the Case, with its several Circumstances, that he may better understand what Method is fittest to be taken, in order to amend and reform the Things that are brought before him. Now all this is easy and practicable, and can by no Means justly expose the Minister, or his Church-Wardens, to the Censure of either Weakness or Ill-will; such a constant and uniform Conduct would at once be an Argument of their Integrity and Zeal, Prudence and Charity, and promote the Interest of Religion and Virtue amongst them that are under their Care and Inspection. And those that are so weak to be offended with them, should consider, that as the Minister is *charged*, so the Church-Wardens are *sworn* to present habitual and scandalous Offenders; and if they are still so ill disposed to censure them for so doing, it will be very evident that they are no true Friends to the Persons concerned, they are not good Christians at the Bottom; they might as well be angry at those that laid hold upon a distracted Person, when they saw him going to set his House on Fire, or throw himself down a dangerous Precipice, or lay violent Hands upon himself.

To conclude, when Church-Wardens seriously consider the Plainness of their Duty, the  
Dignity



Dignity of their Office, and the Trust and Confidence that is reposed in them; how much the Reputation of the Church, and the Honour of God is concerned, in their acting honestly or unfaithfully, what Consequences their Care or Neglects draw after them, relating both to this World, and that to come: When they consider the Weakness of the Pretences or Excuses that the Contempt of their Oaths is grounded upon, how little they will avail when they come to be urged or exposed at the Tribunal of an omniscient and impartial Judge, it is to be hoped that they will need no other Arguments or Motives, to persuade and engage them to act like honest Men; and in Pursuance of their Oaths, to make Head against that Profaneness and Immorality which is so boldly acted in Opposition to the Laws of Heaven and Earth, in Contempt of the publick and private Admonitions of their spiritual Pastors, and Christian Friends, in Despight of the Rules of the Gospel, and the very Dictates of common Sense and Reason.





## A P P E N D I X.

**T**O take away the Plea of Ignorance from *Church-Wardens*, and to convince them more effectually of their Duty, it hath been thought proper to refer them to such *Ecclesiastical Laws*, by which the *Neglects* and *Vices*, which they have been admonished to take due Notice of, are *Presentable*.

As to the Power which *Bishops* exercise themselves, or which they grant to their *Chancellors*, *Archdeacons*, *Commissaries*, &c. it is so well known to be founded upon *Immemorial Custom*, and *general Practice*, the *Grants* of our *Princes*, and the *Statutes of the Realm*, \* that we are not to suppose the *Church-Wardens* will raise any Question about it.

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\* 25 Hen. VIII. Cap. 19. 1 Eliz. Cap. 1.

And as to the *particular Laws* that require these Things to be presented, it were easy to shew, that the *ancient Ecclesiastical Canons and Constitutions* made or received here, and confirmed by the *Statute*, \* do both forbid them, empower the Ordinary to enquire after them upon Oath, and require those that are sworn for that Purpose, to present them.

But as it would be needless to point out *those Canons* to such Persons as have the Books in which they are contain'd, so it would be to little Purpose to refer those to them, who have no Opportunity of consulting them. Besides, there seems to be no great Necessity for it, since it may be thought sufficient to shew, that they are presentable by our *present Canons*, which are published in *English*, and bound up with the large *Common-Prayer-Books* in our *Parish Churches and Chapels*, where the Church-Wardens may have constant Access to them, and where they ought to hear them read over by the Minister once every Year †.

And since it is easy to consult them in every Church, it is less necessary to transcribe them into these Papers, which by all convenient Brevity, were from the first intended to be made easy or tolerable to those, who may be less patient of longer Discourses. Let it suffice then

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\* 25 Hen. VIII.

† See the *Royal Confirmation of the Canons*,  
1603.



Only to refer to the Number of the Canons, by which they may be easily found, and which evidently prove the Thing for which they are quoted.

And First, *Adultery, Whoredom, Incest, or any other Uncleanneſs*, although they be puniſhable by the ancient Laws of the Kingdom, \* yet they are ſo confeſſedly ſubject to the Cognizance of the *Spiritual Court*, that one of our *Statutes* † hath expreſſly forbidden the Temporal Courts to grant Prohibitions to take Cauſes of this Nature out of *this Court*; and that Vices of this Kind ought to be preſented there, is evident by *Canon cix.*

2. *Drunkenneſs* is a Vice againſt which ſeveral Statutes have been provided ‖, and which is alſo ſubject to the Cognizance of our *Eccleſiaſtical Ordinances*: Witneſs *Canon cix.*

3. *Profane and common Curſing and Swearing*, are not only condemned by expreſs *Statutes*, under proper Penalties, ‡ but are alſo preſentable in the *Eccleſiaſtical Court*, as appears from *Canon cix.*

\* Coke *Inf.* 3. 205, 206. 18 *Eliz.* C. 3.  
7 *Fac.* C. 4.

† 13 *Edw.* I.

‖ 4 *Fac.* C. 5. 21 *Fac.* C. 7.

‡ 21 *Fac.* C. 20. 6 and 7 *W.* III. C. 11.

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4. As to the *due Observation of the Lord's-Day*, it is provided by *Canon xiii.* and *xiv.* which suppose and require the Attendance of all manner of Persons within the *Church of England*, upon the Publick Worship of God. And herein they are so far from being contrary to the Laws of the Land, that several Statutes have been made to provide for the better Observation of the same \*, and to oblige all Persons that are come to Years of Discretion, constantly to repair upon that Day to some Place of God's publick Worship †.

5. *The Neglect of the Holy Communion* is another Instance of Irreligion, that our *present Ecclesiastical Laws* have provided against: And they require every Parishioner to Communicate at least three times every Year, and especially at the *Feast of Easter*, under the Penalty and Danger of the Law; as appears from *Canons xxi.* *xxii.* and *cxii.*; and from the *last Rubrick save one*, after the Order for the Administration of the Lord's-Supper in the *Book of Common-Prayer*.

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\* 1 *Car. C. 1.* 3 *Car. C. 4. §. 22.* 16 *Car. I. C. 4.* 29 *Car. II. C. 7.*

† 1 *Eliz. C. 2.* 23 *Eliz. C. 1. §. 5, 6, 7.* 29 *Eliz. C. 6.* 3 *Jac. C. 4.* 1 *W. and M. C. 18.*

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6. Those *Parents and Masters* who neglect to send their *Children and Servants* to the Church, to be *Catechized by the Minister*, offend against our *Ecclesiastical Laws*, and are liable to be presented and censured for that Neglect, as will appear, by consulting the *Second Rubrick after the Church Catechism*, and the *lix Canon*.

7. It is also evident, that those Persons who behave themselves *irreverently* in the Times and Places of Divine Worship, act contrary to our Rubricks and Ecclesiastical Constitutions, and are presentable by them; Witness the *xviii*, and the *cxi Canons*.

8. In a word, every open and notorious evil Liver, is to be repelled from the Holy Table, by the *Rubrick before the Communion Service*, and is presentable upon the *xxvi and cix Canons*.

Nay, those that lie under a *common Fame*, or *vehement Suspicion* of such Crimes as are punishable by the Ecclesiastical Laws, are also presentable by the *cxv and cxvii Canons*; and therefore do our Ecclesiastical Ordinaries generally enquire after those Persons, who by common Fame lie under such Imputations, in the Articles of Visitation delivered to Church-Wardens, by way of *Charge and Direction*.

F I N I S.

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